

# BETHLEHEM BELLS

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B. J. HOADLEY



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# BETHLEHEM BELLS

BY

B. J. HOADLEY



BOSTON  
SHERMAN, FRENCH & COMPANY  
1912

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TO  
HELEN—CROWNED  
WHO HEARD THE MUSIC OF  
THE BELLS OF BETHLEHEM



## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

These gathered Christmas Annuals written by the author desiring to help others, and unterrified, perhaps fortunately, by critics of books, are offered the public with the hope that Bethlehem may be seen and appreciated. Written a year apart from each other, whatever continuity the brief chapters have is in the unit, and yet the author trusts the whole may have a better unity than of the book covers. Robertson, Mulford, Parker and others forgotten have helped the writer to prepare these words.

B. J. H.

Portland, Oregon.





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## CHAPTER I

### CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

Christmas day is a bright spot in mid-winter. It is a field day for the children. I used to think that Santa Claus actually came down the chimney to fill my stockings. Keep up the innocent delusion of Santa Claus among the children. A day for present making. Suppose a child breaks to pieces his gift before the day ends; it has gone into its life to live forever. God's Christmas gift to men is the child in the manger, and in this child, God and man are linked together. Mystery of mysteries! Mr. Webster, asked if he could comprehend how God and man were blended in Jesus, replied that He could not be his Savior if he comprehended the fact, for He would be no greater than himself.

This true light of the world is not outside of God nor outside of man, but one with God and man. Jesus came into the world to found a kingdom in which fruit is not gathered into barns, nor victories won by battle axes. It is often stated that Jesus came to men to be the founder of a new religion. Not so. You find the word religion in James in the Authorized

Version, but the better translation is *ritual*. The Bible says nothing about *religion*, but everything concerning *righteousness*. Religion is men's feeling and notion about God; righteousness is God's feeling and notion about men. India and China are religious countries and are filled with temples. Religion throws its child into the Ganges. Saul engaged in murder was religious, for he was a Pharisee after the straitest sect of his religion. Religious Jews killed Jesus. Religion depends upon climate, soil, education and temperament; righteousness upon the revealed will of God. Religion comes up from man, righteousness comes down from God.

Jesus came not to earth to bring religion, for earth had too much of it. He came sounding righteousness to the ears of men, and causing them to tingle. What kind of a man was Noah? A righteous man.

Welcome, Thou Star of Bethlehem! In Thy light self beholds its poverty and nakedness. Without Thee we are starvelings. From Thee we find centers, not circumferences, for our poor lives. Man needs not rules but principles for action. Rules are feet, principles the eyes of independence. We become brethren not because Jesus became human, but because He became human to make us divine. He was manifested to take away our sins. Through Him

we receive strength to make gifts unto God.

Though your children give you gifts purchased with your own money, you appreciate them. Though your wife buys you a Christmas gift at the store and has it charged to you, you highly esteem it. So God appreciates our offerings made in the name of His dear Son. This Christmas gift is for us all. "That was the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Every wing can soar in the spiritual heaven above us, and there is room for all sails upon the sea of God's everlasting love. Good will not toward but *among* men. "Glory to God in the highest" means glory ascends to God from us. And peace descends to earth. "On earth peace" and "good will among men."

## CHAPTER II

### OUR MANGER GIFT

The gift of Jesus Christ to us is from a being infinitely our superior; it is most costly; it is attended by a worthy motive; it is to creatures unworthy of it.

The Son given speaks words of importance to ears which hear, Ambassadors bring messages worth attention. Some Ambassadors voice war, others peace. Our Christmas Ambassador brings peace to a world that will have it through surrender of unholy weapons of war.

He took ourselves upon Himself. In His human blood was the flow of Tamar, Rahab and Bathsheba. Yea, He took with Himself a step down to make a step up.

He was always in the world made by Him. He wrestled with Jacob and with drawn sword stood before Joshua.

Two worlds made the gift ours. In the one below were expectation and preparation, from the one above announcement of angels who though not comprehending the song of triumph they sang, gave the song to the ages to prolong. The song intended to be heard in

heaven overflowed down to Bethlehem and time.

He was born a child. To find the world's speech it is necessary to start with the cradle.

He was divine. This Ambassador is of the highest rank. While only the human the world has seen, yet His dignity is that of God. On His face, that of the King, rests the majesty of empire.

No wonder He is the light of the world. The candle lights a room, the street lamps keep darkness from a city, but the sun makes day in a world. Shine on, O Son of Righteousness!

## CHAPTER III

### THAT SONG

The birth of a Savior in the City of David made the angels break out into song. While music on earth ascends to heaven it is also true, that melody in heaven descends to earth.

All things were ready for the Advent. The law had taught school for two thousand years, and the schoolmaster was ready to give over his pupils to the born Redeemer. Authority had dropt its sway upon human hearts. A monarchy precedes a republic.

All hail this messenger from a land where there is no death! In the light of Bethlehem we discover why death is of so little concern to God. All deaths are nothing, when we read in letters of fire upon the sky, "I am the resurrection and the life." By the gate of incarnation we enter broader worlds.

All hail Him room-maker! He takes no room even to be born from us, but he makes more room for us to be and do.

All hail Him peace-bringer! But a sword before peace He brings. The earth is torn into pieces by the frosts of winter that it may laugh over waving harvests. But righteousness makes peace.



Hail Him love-incarnate! There is power in wind, fire, water, earth, and sky, but not the power of love. Instead of giving us a definition of love, He illustrates it in Himself. A person may read a description of a train of cars, and he may see with his own eyes the twentieth century on wheels. Through Him we too may incarnate love, and thus have snatches of song which indicate the fuller music when we go back to Him whose name is Love.

Yes, that day, a Savior was born over there, a Redeemer from sin to be a Christ, the Anointed, and also Lord. There is but one way to receive a Savior—viz., by birth. He will come that way until time is ended.

## CHAPTER IV

### JESUS BORN AGAIN

Christmas brings before the mind of the Christian world the thought of the "manger," the "Babe," and the "Child." We joyously again with the return of mid-winter contemplate the gift of both earth and heaven to man, and prolong the song begun by angels. If angels shouted with rapture over the Advent of one not their Redeemer, shall men be mute as they turn their eyes afresh to the Incarnation? Jesus honored woman in becoming her Son. He became a man, humanity's perfect flower, by being born of a woman. Every Christian mother, therefore stands in a relation to the Bethlehem gift no man can hope to realize. Let us not forget the human in the great Christmas gift unto us. Jesus is divine, therefore he reaches God; Jesus is human, therefore he reaches us. Thinking of Jesus only as the equal with God—as God himself—we lose him in the mysteries that gather around the great white throne. Seeing him as part of ourselves, He still reigns upon the earth upon which we place our weary feet. Come back once more to the manger; behold the Babe and the Child! He is our brother.

The gift came noiselessly to men. So the sunbeams come silently trooping through the spaces to cheer this earth of rocks and storms. The great forces of the universe do not thunder their ceaseless activities.

The announcement of the angels was made to men of occupation—shepherds. Moses kept the flock of Jethro; David fed his father's sheep; Amos was among the herdmen of Tekoa; Jesus became the "Good Shepherd," to know and lead the flock. Appropriately to shepherds spake the angelic voices. The magi followed the star that put them upon their knees by the side of the child. Science leads up to the Christ. Astronomy has killed superstition, and the sweep of the heavens has added to the devotion of men. No true astronomer can part company with Him whose hand guides the worlds sailing in the great deeps around us. And He, the mighty God, must be God-manifest unto us. This is the true demand of science. The chief of the great discoverers in the realm of science have been Christians. Some scientists have been indefinite and skeptical with reference to things unseen. It is only a small portion of the science of our day that is disloyal to the New Testament and its story of the child Jesus. All truth is welcome to kneel at the manger, for Jesus is the truth. Jesus promises to lead human

minds into *all* truth. Astronomers, geologists, philosophers, and all men of learning and inventive power, do their best work when God's thoughts expand their souls and enlarge their horizons.

The incarnate Christ satisfies the wisest and the most ignorant peoples. Greece searched for beauty, and in stream, grove, sky, temple and man, she found it. Plato was as much a poet as a philosopher, for beauty made his disquisitions music. Is there no beauty in the King? Is there not grace as well as strength in the central figure of the ages? Rome asked for honor, valor, and in her best days was a nation of pure homes. What honor, what bravery, belongs to the soldier who is every inch a Christian! Will the name of Havelock be forgotten as long as the words honor and valor shall endure? Does Jesus bring purity to the home? The purest woman that lives may find inspiration in her life in Jesus. The most vicious peoples of the earth have known what it is to be humane at least to friends. But Jesus came to earth to make men love their foes. He died pleading with the Father to forgive those who crucified him, for they knew not what they did.

He came at the right moment; from a prepared bud the flower came forth to fill the world with fragrance. The law trained God's people

to reverence authority, and by ritual and solemn performance the way was made for the king of whom Moses and the prophets wrote.

After birth, development! But the conditions of historical development were not favorable to the product seen in Jesus of Nazareth. Narrow Galilee, bitter Judea, and disciples blinded by their own worldliness, presented only hampering obstacles to the making of the matchless man. He became the brother of all men. The distinctions between Jew and Gentile, Greek and barbarian, vanished before His coming. Caste is still maintained even at this hour, but it is doomed.

And so, as Jesus is born again, the brotherhood idea emerges from the low levels of selfishness, the bitter hate of our hearts perishes, and we are glad and grateful. Hail, Thou Messenger, bringing to us news of a better country and the glory of God's thoughts for us! Thou art the Prince of Peace, although Thou bringest a sword. No peace without the sword! The ground is torn to pieces by the frosts of winter and by the moving ploughs, that waving harvests may fill cribs and barns with plenty. The surgeon cuts, that he may heal. By heroic treatment men are cured. After the storm, blessed calm; tears to-day, but smiles to-morrow.

## CHAPTER V

### INDEBTED TO NONE

Jesus is the world's model for imitation. He is the true original, owing nothing to the ages back of Him, or to the life around Him. It has been said of great men that they are either the product of their own age, or the happy anticipation of the next. Jesus was neither. He inherited nothing. He borrowed nothing. He came to teach, not to be taught. The best lawyers and physicians are constantly on the hunt for authority. Emerson, who seems to be original, gives us in all his interesting messages old thoughts in new dress, thoughts he has taken from thinkers of all ages. Goethe said: "Even the greatest genius would make but little way if he were to create and construct everything out of his mind." Many a brilliant gem in speech has been stolen. But Jesus consulted no authority and read no books. He spoke with authority, has set in motion thousands of pens, has inspired thousands of orators, and has become the pulse of thousands of prayer meetings. His Bible was nature, and He instilled new sweetness into the flowers, and life into the fountains of water

and new charms into the songs of birds. Streets, fields and seas were voiced into his service. He dropped acorns of truth into the soil of the centuries to become sturdy growths to baffle the tempests of time.

The true original begins his kingdom within and reaches the circumference from the center. Jesus of Nazareth did not strike at slavery from the outside. He left in human bosoms principles whose silent movement has liberated slaves, and which will yet free every captive. Then let earth continue the song begun in heaven, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

The law of natural selection may obtain in physical organism, but to develop a mind is needed a force other than the selfish law seen in the lower constructions. Jesus introduced a new law—the law of love—to make character. To work this law one man with even God is not enough. Man must have a fellow man, and learn to live in peace with a human neighbor. Let strife be left with tigers, and let love transform us into citizens of peace. The more people we meet the better, for we may resist temptations appealing to selfishness and have more neighbors, and thus illustrate that no man liveth unto himself.

## CHAPTER VI

### ONLY ONE

There have been four great poets: Homer, Dante, Shakespeare and Goethe; four great historians: Herodotus, Thucydides, Livy, and Gibbon; four great novelists: Scott, Dickens Thackeray, and George Eliot; four great philosophers: Plato, Aristotle, Bacon, and Kant; four great orators: Demosthenes, Cicero, Webster, and Gladstone; four great generals: Alexander, Cæsar, Hannibal, and Napoleon; four great statesmen: Pericles, Pitt, Washington, and Bismarck; four great preachers: Paul, Luther, Wesley, and Spurgeon; but there is only one Jesus Christ.

There was nothing in His surroundings to make Jesus. A great human actor needs not only to be an original force, but to touch conditions to awaken him to think, to will, to do. The parentage of Jesus was found in Joseph and Mary, who were surprised at the independence of their Son, who said, "I must be about my Father's business." At the age of only twelve He became the teacher of teachers. No renowned schools He attended, and He was the pupil of no illustrious teachers. No great



libraries, such as bless our own great, living century, swung their doors open to Him. The land in which He was born was only Palestine, obscure in geography and in political importance, a land that never distinguished itself in art, literature, discovery and deed. He was not a traveler, scarcely ever out of the place of His nativity. Though a Jewish product, He was not confined within the narrow limits of His own people, but was world-wide in His sympathies. While Jews regarded all spiritual privileges theirs, Jesus took them to all men. The Jews called people other than themselves Gentiles. Jesus welcomed them as His brethren.

The ministry of Jesus was one only of three brief years, yet those three years have reconstructed the ages. At the age of only thirty-three years He died. A well-preserved man finds his best years of productiveness between the ages of forty-five and sixty-five. The ministry of the only one Jesus was obscure—it attracted no attention outside the narrow limits within which He spoke. There have been many voices spoken in America that have been heard across the sea.

The poverty surrounding the only one Jesus was the climax of poverties. The foxes have holes, the birds have nests; but the Son of Man had not where to lay His head. The one who

spoke by the word of His power the worlds into their shining pathways, the one who filled the mountains with gold and silver to become the money of men was born in abject poverty, and never emerged from it. Why this poverty? Purpose gives significance to action. The toil of a workman for wife and children throws a golden splendor into dusty workshop and upon blackened hands and face and soiled clothes. What was the purpose back of the poverty of Jesus? To make us rich. That purpose goldens my life and the life of yours. Poverty is a sign of danger. A crew of starving men do not look with benevolence upon one another. Poverty makes hunger, and hunger turns, may be, a saint into a villain. Jesus came to lift us above poverty that we are to fear as we would pestilence. The white Christ is helping man the world over to exorcise the demon of poverty, to put raiment upon his naked body, food on his desolate table, and money into his empty purse. The purpose is to make us also rich toward God.

We leave dollars, thank God! in the world; the world needs them; but we take ourselves into eternity. Old Cornelius Vanderbilt, dying, said: "William, I leave you \$75,000,000; wife, I leave you \$25,000,000"; but he could not leave himself; so, turning to the wall, he said: "Wife, sing, 'Come, ye sinners, poor and

needy.' ” He became poor, the only one Jesus, to pour wealth into us.

The world has seen but one perfect friendship; it was in the only one Jesus. At the beginning Jesus found but one friend, Simeon, who, having taken into his arms the light of the world, went up to glory. But he became the friend of humanity—a friend that sticketh closer than a brother, and first taught the lesson man has not yet learned, that it is more blessed to give than to receive. This sublime friendship may be called love; the world never before had seen it defined by example, for what the Greeks and Romans called love was but the sensuous. He put a sublime estimate not only upon the soul, but upon the whole body of man. He pitied them who sinned and rejected Him, and looked with compassion upon ruined human nature, and loving that which was lost He made it possible to re-enter Paradise. Dying of a broken heart, He put the crowning mark upon that wonderful friendship.

What think ye of the peace only the one gives to troubled hearts? His peace does not waste away; losses and bereavements do not consume it. Not a dead peace such as is found in the cemetery; but a living peace that converts houses into homes, earth into heaven, is the peace that passeth all understanding. The master said one day to a smiling mother, “Give

me the jewel that shines upon your bosom.”  
“Not so,” she replied. The master said:  
“With you this jewel may be lost; but with me  
it will not be lost. Thine is mine.” So the  
child went up to heaven; but peace came down  
to an aching bosom. And so Amen to Beth-  
lehem.

## CHAPTER VII

### CHRISTMAS BELLS

The first great event in history is creation, the bringing order out of chaos; the second is like unto it, the birth of Jesus Christ. The second event found humanity in confusion, and it purposes to bring harmony from the discord found in humanity. Jesus comes by birth to man, and He will continue thus to come until the end of time.

The errand of Jesus Christ to man is to found a kingdom of love, by illustrating love in Himself. The world had heard of love before the Advent of Jesus Christ, but had never seen it. This kingdom of love welcomes within it the saved man. Science and philosophy are welcome to kneel at the cross, but they are not the cross. In saving man, Jesus Christ fits man unto Himself; that is, the man is to fall into line with the Christ, and not the Christ with the man. The eye was made for the light, but not before the light.

The new power earth receives in the gift of the manger is the one-man power. The one-man power is all right, if we have the right kind of man. This man Christ Jesus permits

no rival to share the throne with Him. He is the root of the tree, the fountain of the river, the base of the pillar, the soul of the body, the sun of the world.

Regeneration comes before reformation. Remember, reformation calls for no new material, takes what it finds, and puts it into new forms, and gives it new uses. Regeneration changes the material itself. It transmutes iron into silver, and brass into gold. No culture can convert a thistle into the lily of the valley.

The King makes one man better than another. It is said, "One man is as good as another." That depends who the other is. In Christ man has consideration for the person who knifes him, sacrifices for the knifer, and is full of chivalry to the despoiler. "Say, what can Chloe want? She wants a heart." The elect man conducts his business affairs on the line of integrity, and puts pious frauds under his feet. Even in the man who swears and drinks, honesty is a bright spot, the gold in the warp and woof of his life. He tells no white lies, for all lies are as black as perdition. With the King, man treats decently his wife and children, and woman bids good-bye to a nagging, scolding tongue. Remember the manger where Jesus was born, we are kind to the lower animals. With the King, not physical but moral courage we put in its proper

place. We give to a cause when it needs help, and we are courteous to all men. If success comes to a man better than another, it humbles him. If others succeed more than we, it is mean to be secretly distressed, and to delicately suggest how success was won. If others fail or fall, our heads are brought low, for their defeats are ours.

The world needs the birth of Jesus Christ. Make room for Him in the newspaper, in the kitchen and in the Senate chamber. Make room for Him in labor and capital, and their conflict is ended. Make room for Him if we would do as well as be. Better be broken into a thousand pieces by ocean's wave, than rot down in the harbor of inglorious ease. The old dog sleeps away summer hours under the tree, but work is our satisfaction. Character may have Mary's devotion and Martha's busy hands.

## CHAPTER VIII

### ADVENT

Advent of whom? He who came unto us is the root and offspring of David. Root indicates superiority to David; in fine, divinity without which our Christmas gift is of no worth to us. David was rooted in the Lord, and our Lord said, "Before Abraham, I am." I welcome an arm extended toward me that is omnipotent enough to lift my feet out of the mire and put them on the highway of holiness.

Offspring of David means descended from David. Humanity is there in that Christmas gift. We do not think enough of the humanity in Jesus Christ. Because Jesus was a man He fell asleep on the vessel on Gennesaret during day-time. Because He was a man labor so exhausted His physical nature that His sleep was so profound that wave and tempest did not disturb Him. Indeed, it took the whisper of distress to reach His ear and cause the man to awake the God.

He who came unto us is the bright and morning star. When this day-star arose in the eastern sky all the wild beasts of superstition and iniquity skulked back into darkness



where they belong. Nothing is like light in protecting a city. The electric lights are the best policemen of a town. "Hail, holy light!"

"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

A star led the wise men of the East to the Mother and the Child within the manger. Not an angel, but a star, with which the Magi were more conversant, led them on to Bethlehem. "And the Gentiles shall come to thy light." In the manger cradle was a Redeemer for all men. Paul said to the Ephesians, "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Jesus could die at Jerusalem, but not there was He born. Humble Bethlehem was the spot, not the capital.

The angels with which the Jewish shepherds were familiar, not a star, appeared unto these men of occupation. What did they sing? "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Here is the sum and substance of the Gospel of the Son of God. My life may be "Glory to God" because I am about my Father's business in taking light to some dark corner of the earth. But while I give glory to God, His alone, I reserve peace to myself. In all my ups and downs I may have a peace that throws a golden light upon a thousand struggles. I may have good

will learned at the manger toward them who wrong me.

The morning stars sung the first creation, but the angels sang the second creation. The song begun in heaven shall be wedded to eternity.

## CHAPTER IX

### CAN THE INFINITE BECOME LESS THAN ITSELF?

I think so. It does in the birth at Bethlehem. By being born, Jesus partook of the limitations of the human. His life was at a time and place which imparted to Him something of their marks, and there were some things Jesus said He did not know, which assertion indicates His renunciation of omniscience, in fine, his self-limitation comes out of his self-emptying. When the Infinite can not become finite, it ceases to be infinite. Incarnation is the word, and divine immanence is other than that, and no more can be displaced by it, than evangelism by ethics, death by sacrifice, and faith by spirituality. Bethlehem stands for incarnation, God made flesh. The simplicity of the call to sinners shamed, defeated, and in need of deliverance, is so deep at the beginning—Bethlehem, and the end—Calvary, that no man can fathom it. Immanence is seen only in creation, but Jesus the Lord is uncreated.

We know but few things, but we see Jesus at the manger, not only in the limitation of humanity, but also God-disclosed. He was the

Son of God, as we by grace become the sons of God. He was not a rival of God, but the very God-head, taking the place by the side of the Father He had ever held and thus divinely starts all true progression. Rationalism begins with the world, but the Gospel with the Word, and thus the Gospel stands for grasp and swing of faith, grace the eternal wonder of heaven, and holiness that has in it the heart beat of God.

God-man, a contradiction? Well, we have learned to prize contradictions, and to see in them the expression of the most important truths. We work out our own salvation, that is ourselves, and God worketh in us to will and do, and that is not ourselves. To follow Jesus Christ is slavery and freedom, chained and loose, but we follow, and the contradiction helps us on.

But there is a deeper incarnation than that of Bethlehem. There is no salvation in the manger or virgin-birth, and no deliverance from sin in the metaphysics of the union of two natures in Jesus Christ. It is not far from Bethlehem to Calvary, where a wounded heaven asserted its supremacy, and where honor assaulted by rebels, lifted its head. The cross became the true throne, before which Bethlehem and even Resurrection morning bow. Yes, a throne, a throne of judgment out of which

the judgment of the last day flows as an incident. I am judged there at Mount Calvary—there my justification is settled and decided. Therefore, we who really see the cross the fulfillment of Bethlehem, are not a company of kind people but of holy people, our virtues are not domestic, but the fruit of the Spirit, we are a converted people, not educated, and our conversation is in heaven. He was made flesh, and also sin.

## CHAPTER X

### WHY BETHLEHEM?

To give us the Word, which was before manger-birth, which was with God, in fine, which was God.

The outcome of Bethlehem is to manifest God. This is not unthinkable, to be otherwise is unthinkable. If God is manifest in His Son then He is knowable. The world was standing on its tip-toe in expectation of the Redeemer.

“What sound is it I hear ascending through the dark? The tumultuous noise of the nations. Their rejoicings and lamentations.

The pleading of their prayer. The groans of their despair, the cry of their imprecations.

Their wrath, their woe, their hate.

Surely the world doth wait, the coming of its Redeemer.”

Bethlehem gave us human flesh to dwell as the Son of Man among us.

“Like as a man He trod on earthly soil,

He bore each pang, and strove in weary toil,  
He spoke with human words, with pity sighed,  
Like us He mourned and feared and died.”

Life to us comes. Who bridges the gulf be-

tween death and life? Jesus only. He is not a creed, which is only an empty bucket half-way down to the water of life. In that life is light which the darkness does not catch. He opens blind eyes and they see. See what? Themselves, what they are and what they may be. If persons plunge and rear like wild horses, they may see obedience to tame them. They see the other rooms than here. "In my Father's house are many mansions." They are guests now in their Father's house to enter other rooms.

Bethlehem summons us to receive its gift. Still many do not receive the gift. A gift is not ours until we take it. It was Hector who was not known by his own child.

"Thus as he spoke, Great Hector stretched his arms,  
To take his child; but back the infant shrank,  
Crying, and sought his nurse's sheltering breast,  
Scar'd by the barren helm and horse-hair plume,  
That noddest fearful on the warrior's crest."

Who is among us? It was years ago the son of Victoria, whose true crown she ever wore, was that of true womanhood. There is another Son of a woman among us, but He is also the Son of God. We may lay our heads upon His bosom; we cannot touch the hem of His garments from the fact His robe was destroyed by His enemies.

Love meets love. There are a thousand eyes of night, one eye there is of day. So at sundown dark begins. The mind has a thousand eyes; one eye there is of the heart. When love goes down, then it is night.



## CHAPTER XI

### THE SECOND CREATION

The first man is Adam, the second is the Lord from heaven. In Him we discern all moral good not obtained in the manner we indeed do win as we move on toward perfection by struggle and scars received in battle, but put within Him by His own eternal nature. A supernatural Christ we worship in the manger.

Creative products are seen coming before our observation at one leap, as in the coming of the animal, and man himself, created in the image of God. So it is with the God-man.

Greece lives in Plato, Rome in Cæsar, America in Washington, England in Gladstone, Germany in Bismarck, Italy in Cavour, and humanity finds its supreme in Jesus Christ. All other representations are but incomplete, and compared with our Lord are as the little hills around Rainier, Mount Hood, or Shasta.

Great things took place before the Lord came to us. The world had been getting ready for the manger-birth for four thousand years. A fore-runner in the strange and earnest man of the wilderness had been heard by eager multitudes, and the great three, Peter, John and

Paul, were at hand, to erect a great kingdom after Jesus was gone from us.

It was not necessary for Jesus to have evil within Himself to overcome to be what He was, for evil does not make evil. The first thing man is to do to be honest is to put away dishonesty. Dishonesty is no likeness to honesty.

Other teachers than the Man of Galilee have had to be helped themselves, but our helper says to us, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" He made a prayer for us, we utter, but that prayer was not His; He left it to be ours. The true Lord's prayer was offered under the shadow of the cross.

He is ours. Our Father, when we cease to be the children of Satan, ours to make a brotherhood of flesh itself welcome the brotherhood of the Spirit, for men become brothers when they come out of sin which pulls us apart from one another, and ours to make the world a stepping-stone to purity, righteousness and heaven.

Rome robbed people to pay the expenses of her imperial rule, moderns are despoiling nature to make things go, but Jesus is born that we may have life, and have it more abundantly. He does not share our pain and burden, but takes them all. He strengthens the climbing footsteps of all who trust Him. Sure-

ly, Bethlehem spreads the dawn upon the mountains. No wonder Christmas renews the youth of the dying year.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE SON OF GOD

#### A CHRISTMAS STUDY

There is a disposition not difficult to discern at the present hour, to eliminate from human belief the idea of the miraculous birth of Jesus Christ, and instead of God the Father of the Son, we are to affirm Joseph to be the Father of Jesus of Nazareth. In fine, Jesus is only the son of man. This destructive criticism is far-sighted, and knows if the first stronghold of Christian faith and doctrine is dislodged, other fortresses will fall, such as the Resurrection of the man of Galilee, and His Ascension to Heaven, and the return at Pentecost. All is to be put upon the level of the natural, and good-bye to the supernatural. As gladly as we all welcome the thought of the Immanence of God, that is God abiding constantly within His works, instead of the works set in movement, and God withdrawn—the hard and fast mechanism of deistic speculation—and making plain to human intelligences, His omnipresence, we are to remember God's Transcendence to His works and that there is danger in our thought of sinking the supernatural into the

natural. If all is natural there is no supernatural, and if all is general there is nothing special. Or, put it this way: If all God's acts are special, there is nowhere a special, and if all is miraculous what can be miraculous? If we think that we are thus bringing God very near to us, we are deluded, for we put God far, far away from us, and we lose the doctrine of an over-ruling Providence, and prayer loses its joy. He who would overthrow the immaculate conception of Jesus Christ would sweep away every miracle recorded upon the pages of the New Testament.

The Christian Church still reverently affirms, "Born of the Virgin Mary," and before that, "who was conceived by the Holy Ghost," and will keep on repeating those words until time is wedded to eternity.

Jesus the incarnate! Simply God in a human body? That would be taking unto himself but a part of man, and the minor part, and would be no more God become a man than the body alone would make a Pericles or a Lincoln. Incomprehensible this? Yes. But it does not contradict reason, for if it would do so, away with a belief in it. Accept nothing that is contrary to reason, but it is a mere assumption to say being above reason is against it. Here is a human spirit—a diamond—and a human body—copper—see how they beautifully blend

into one masterpiece upon feet and looking up to the stars, the fact bewilders reason and does not oppose it. A thousand times nay!

He who was born at Bethlehem passed through infancy, childhood, youth and manhood, battled with the enemy, had favor with men, and was hated by them, developed in His humble soul life as others advance, but remember, O my soul, He was perfect in all this advance, and did not learn perfection by passing through error. Remember He was a perfect humanity in an unbroken forwardness to summon humanity to its lost integrity and to a most glorious restoration. Let the bells of Bethlehem ring in our matchless Christ.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE NEW EDEN

It is found at Bethlehem; for with the birth in the manger a new light purpled the sky. Jesus was born in Judea, a land to which all other lands came. The whole East had struggled for Palestine, and so the Hebrew had gone into all tongues. Judaism had been lifted out of the mire of the Nile. Two Dispersions, that of the East and that of the West, had taken place. The Septuagint had put the sacred oracles in the polished Greek language, and both the Jewish and Gentile worlds had long ripened into the fruit of Christianity. Rome was mistress of the world, and when the birth of Christ conquered Rome, her power was turned Godward.

Bethlehem is as old as God; for Jesus was born before sin had a beginning. The golden link between earth and sky was forged in the thought of God before the worlds were spoken into their pathways. But Bethlehem made the thought an incarnation.

It was a man who was born. Behind Him were the defiled generations of men, and some of His human ancestors have no honored place

in the memories of mankind. Why such a defiled ancestry? Why such lives behind Him? To gather into His own veins the poisoned blood of the impure, and to remain pure Himself, becomes a Savior. Though unfallen, Jesus was a man. As a man, He longed for companionship; and hence the twelve disciples, a complete representation of varied humanity. He sorrowed, became angry, hungered; and His dying cry was that of thirst. As a man, He learned by suffering obedience; and, aside from the pain seen in atonement, may be seen that connected with the development of His spotless character. Jesus Christ's life was an unfolding. All great lives develop and expand. No human characters are made in this world without heart-ache and heart-break. The whole human history of Jesus has never been written. Each evangelist has given us, in the New Testament, only some aspect of his history.

Divinity stooped down to Bethlehem and to the world. We may regard Jesus, upon the Divine side, a work of love, a wonder to men, a power of himself, and a sign. It was not the garment he wore that healed, but the God in the man. The Church and its sacraments are but the garments of Jesus. It is the mighty God who saves. Christ in His divinity brings man to God and to repentance, and not to repentance and to God. He forgives and wel-



comes sinners. Law never surrenders; it grinds us all to powder. Grace meets law; and so great things take place. The greatest event that occurs on earth is the passage of a soul from darkness into light. Never mind if the earth does not see and record it. The heart smites itself, and finds relief because Jesus is born within its domain.

Brahmanism says nature is God, and be true to nature; Buddhism says, human wills make rest; Confucianism says, obey moral law, and you are saved; Mohammedanism says, be careful to know your accountability to God; Judaism says, sacrifice kills sin; but Christianity says, salvation comes to men by Jesus Christ. Everywhere but in Christianity man saves himself. All other teachers but Jesus Christ affirm that we are defiled from without.

Jesus forgave sin, not sins, and hence he had no patience with Peter in his count of human offenses. He taught the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men. Hence we esteem the worth of man the world around. If men are lost, they are the lost children of God.

Bethlehem means victory in death. It does not exalt our estimate of ourselves to detect our energies declining and an open grave in our pathways. All the cheer there is, He who created all things is our living Redeemer. Then, there is the daring leap of faith,

as well as the sitting of humanity at His feet.

In that gift God gave Himself. The soldier gives his skill in battle to his native land, the poet his immortal verse, the sailor his victory of the wave, and the sculptor his chiseled marble. We give what we are and what we make to others. All God had to give us is love. It is indeed all.

Glory to God, one perfect man has been this way! He never broke down. At that time, when Jesus in His development as a man, realized fully the power of Divinity that was His, He did not yield to the temptation to debase His equipment by doing the unworthy. He said that bread-winning is not the end of man, when asked to convert stones into bread. He would not cast Himself down to show that He was the Son of God. Though Napoleon loved Josephine, he divorced her from himself for his own glory. All hail, Thou Conqueror from Bethlehem! He was among us. At first He was neglected, then stared at, and finally was put to death. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not."

The light that comes through his wounds, is the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. All His scars are precious to the pure.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE UNSEEN BECOME THE SEEN

In the birth of Jesus Christ eternities dropped into time. Man surely must have an image to part company with the dissatisfaction that arises from the contemplation of the purely abstract. Plato delighted in abstractions; but the majority of people are not drawn toward the incomprehensible and the unseen. Hence God manifests Himself in the birth of His Son. By the aid of the sunbeam we look up to the king of day. Jesus Christ is the light with which we see God. The God-incarnate is the necessity of the ages that flow into eternity. Man is a spirit living in a body; in Jesus Christ God abides in humanity.

The Bethlehem gift contains all the content of heaven to illustrate God is love. The mother who gives her only son to fight the battles of his country surely loves her country. There will be no more manger births.

The words of the God-man born among us are more to us than what he did. Works are subordinate to words, as we read the New Testament story. The record is a brief one. Many books Carlyle gave the world to teach

it silence. But all Jesus said when this way is held by a few pages. Those few words are, however, all that time and eternity need to be spoken.

He spoke with the utmost simplicity. There are no labored disquisitions in His teachings. How often we try to follow a philosopher, and close his book and ask, What does he mean? Great thoughts love simplicity of expression. Ornamentation did not characterize His speech, and thus to draw attention from His thought to the beauty of His expression. We sometimes hear bejeweled language, and, in admiration and analysis of figures, receive no real message. A straight road makes a quick journey.

He spoke convictions and not opinions unto us. Opinion is simply mist. Out of mist the sunbeams smite rivers speeding down to the sea. Opinion dreams; conviction affirms. Conviction builds bridges, drops ships into the deep, lights cannon, and creates institutions. A little of Bible doctrine, a little of Christian Science, a little of Theosophy, and a little of Faith-healing leave one in the fog. Peter became truly great when he turned away from opinions about Jesus Christ, and eloquently uttered conviction in "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"; and when he said this, Jesus gave him the keys. Conviction opens locked doors. It will always be so.

The world does not outgrow Jesus the Christ. All science is on trial. 'The book on science written yesterday is rewritten to-day. Let the scientists tell us what we are to hold in the world of the senses before we reconstruct our theologies. Instead of bettering the Sermon on the Mount, the world has not yet caught a good glimpse of it.

He was not one-sided. Bacon was inductive, Aristotle deductive, Copernicus studied the heavens, Newton became the apostle of gravitation, and Professor Morse put messages on trembling wires; but the Son of man enters all fields in which we may be and do. He spoke about God; and therefore whose God is like our God? He spoke about man, and saw dignity in even his prostration. He spoke about heaven, and we hear sounds from afar that have music in them. He spoke about hell, and he who proclaims danger ahead may be regarded not up to date, but he stands by the God-man who saw the lightning flashes on the sky of transgression.

He was born to teach us the worth of silence. There are many kinds of silence, and among them are they of sympathy and helpfulness. "But he answered her not a word." God often answers us not a word when he would give Himself to us. He was silent before accusation that it might talk itself to death.

He made truth a pathway to an end. The end He lifted beyond man to reach, is Christ-like character. Truth has no power to regenerate, and imparts no strength to the self-acting powers of the soul to grapple with sin and be victorious. Christian service is not a dry morality, but an outburst of passion in the struggle for light and heaven. Glorious immortality transforms existence into life. Hence courage. Why? The most of man's life lies concealed in the mighty Beyond. Onward and upward! So! How poor, however, is each day of a man's life! God graciously puts it into the crucible of night, and makes it the morning, and we start again.

So a merry Christmas to all, and all hail,  
Star of Bethlehem!

THE END

















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